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Food advertising to children: Marketing obesity

Baridalyne Nongkynrih

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, India

The world is witnessing an alarming epidemic of childhood obesity which is emerging as a major public health concern world over. Eating behaviors established during childhood continues into adulthood and is responsible for much long-term health and chronic disease risk. This paper looks into the various ways in which marketing influences the choice of food and beverages in children. An array of marketing venues and vehicles are used to aggressively

promote unhealthy food ranging from school-based, promotions, television, movie product placement, internet, mobile phones. Children are aware of food brands as young as 2-3years of age. Over the ages 2-11years, children develop consumption motives and values; develop strategies for purchase requests and negotiation. Television advertising is responsible for a large share of the marketing of unhealthy foods and, according to systematic reviews of evidence; advertisements influence children's food preferences, purchase requests and consumption patterns. WHO's marketing recommendations aim to reduce the exposure of children to advertisements

for unhealthy foods. This paper at the various counter-strategies to reduce junk food consumption and promote awareness in the public about healthy food options. Regulating advertisements to children, reducing the salt content of processed food, communication with the public, engagement with the food industry and government regulations are crucial. High-level government commitment and the threat of legislation, transparent processes, international food, and beverage alliance and cross-industry agreements for certain products ate some measures which are underway to address the challenge of childhood obesity.

baridalyne@gmail.com